



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 9-15 (A) – Philippians 4:1-9

Focus: *Keep on Doing These Things*

word of life

“Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 4:1-9

As Paul concludes his letter to his beloved Philippians, he offers final words of concern for several women who are in leadership roles. Paul’s concern is not that women serve as leaders, but rather that Christian leaders do not have the same mind—*the mind of Christ*. The congregation in Philippi was founded under the leadership of Lydia. (See Acts. 16:11-15; 40) In years past, Paul worked beside Eudoia and Syuntyche for the sake of Christ. He knows the capabilities of women. Paul asks the congregation to help these women work through their conflict.

1. *Based on your knowledge about the role of women in the first century, what makes this request significant?*
2. *Does it surprise you to hear of these women leaders in Philippi? How so?*

Paul shifts his attention from the particularities in Philippi and offers words for all times. Paul keeps it simple. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4 NRSV) How confusing and puzzling his joyful attitude must have been to his jailers.

3. *What allows Paul to rejoice even when facing the uncertainties of life or death?*

Paul’s words in this passage are worth putting on your refrigerator. Take your worries to God in prayer. Allow the peace of God to fill your hearts and minds. Choose something positive to fill your thoughts.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8 NRSV)

Bombarded by words, requests, and distractions, it can be challenging to keep focused on the positive. The competition for our best thoughts is fierce and ongoing. Paul recommends giving full attention to those things positive.

4. *Quickly name those things true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing and commendable.*
5. *What are things worthy of praise?*
6. *What changes, if any, occur in you once you focus on positive things?*

Paul final words of recommendation are quite personal. Paul suggests using his own life, words, and actions as a model. Paul knows he is not perfect, but offers himself as a living example of someone who puts his faith into action.

Peace comes from God alone in Christ Jesus. Consequently, Paul rejoices and is filled with peace even as he sits in prison uncertain about his life. Paul clearly sees the promised resurrection ahead, and he is ready. But until that time, Paul vigorously keeps on doing the things on this earth which point to Christ.

7. *Summarize Paul’s final words to his beloved people of Philippi.*

word among us

Heather looks at the clock. The minutes pass slowly as she waits for sunset. Her mouth is dry. She is hungry and thirsty. As a faithful Muslim, Heather is participating in Ramadan, a holy month of fasting for adult males and females. Ramadan's obligatory fast includes abstaining from food, drink, and sexual activities from dawn until sunset. Despite being ready for the end of her daily fast, Heather feels blessed by the discipline of giving up something. She makes it through the fast by concentrating on God and her love for others.

1. *What do you know about Ramadan?*
2. *Describe what it would be like to not drink or eat from sunrise to sunset?*

Some Christians choose to fast during the season of Lent. Unlike Muslims who have specific guidelines on fasting, Christians vary in their practice. Fasting during Lent might include abstaining from food such as meat on Fridays or chocolate for all of Lent. Occasionally a congregation resolves to give up negative behavior like gossiping or bickering during Lent. Others are encouraged to not give up something, but to take on acts of love and service.

3. *Have you ever fasted? If so, describe that experience.*
4. *Why don't Christians have a unified way of fasting?*

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he urges people to fast—to give up negativity and worry. This is not an idle exercise, but advice for difficult times. Paul writes his words while in prison, uncertain if he will be put to death.

5. *What is it like to be around someone who is always negative?*
6. *What would it be like to fast (give up) negative thoughts?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Paul writes his words to the Philippians while in prison. He has every reason to complain and worry. But instead, he focuses on things "worthy of praise." He offers a word of blessing, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

7. *Describe the peace of God.*

In baptism, we are reborn as children of God. We are given the spirit of wisdom and understanding. The peace of God will keep our minds on the things that are true, honorable, just, and pure. Once we fast from negativity, there is room and energy for that which is honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable.

8. *Make a list of five things worthy of praise. How easy or difficult was this assignment?*
9. *If you follow Paul's advice, how might your life change?*

Prayer

Christ, keep us focused on those things worthy of praise.

last word

Each morning, begin the day naming five things worthy of praise.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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